

Members

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Rep. Robert Behning
Rep. Sue Scholer
Rep. Phyllis Pond
Sen. Teresa Lubbers, Vice-Chairperson
Sen. Steven Johnson
Sen. Ron Alting
Sen. Billie Breaux
Sen. Connie Sipes
Sen. Earline Rogers



INTERIM STUDY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ISSUES

Legislative Services Agency
200 West Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-2789
Tel: (317) 232-9588 Fax: (317) 232-2554

LSA Staff:

Jeanette Adams, Attorney for the Committee
Irma Reinumagi, Attorney for the Committee
David Hoppmann, Fiscal Analyst for the Committee
Chuck Mayfield, Fiscal Analyst for the Committee

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MEETING MINUTES¹

Meeting Date: September 19, 2000
Meeting Time: 10:00 A.M.
Meeting Place: State House, 200 W. Washington
St., Room 233
Meeting City: Indianapolis, Indiana
Meeting Number: 4

Members Present: Rep. Gregory Porter, Chairperson; Rep. Clyde Kersey; Rep. Robert Behning; Rep. Sue Scholer; Rep. Phyllis Pond; Sen. Teresa Lubbers, Vice-Chairperson; Sen. Steven Johnson; Sen. Ron Alting; Sen. Earline Rogers.

Members Absent: Rep. Richard Bodiker; Sen. Billie Breaux; Sen. Connie Sipes.

The chairperson called the meeting to order at 10:15 A.M., and introduced Sen. David Ford to the Committee to explain his request for a summer study concerning a school evaluation program. Sen. Ford stated that while everyone wants to improve the quality of education, the data used to evaluate education, and the conclusions drawn from that data, generally come from partisan sources, and so are considered suspect. He perceives a need for data and evaluation that would come from a source that does not have a particular agenda, such as Standard & Poor's (S&P). At an NCSL conference, Sen. Ford received information from S&P concerning evaluation services they are providing for school programs in other states, and so wished to have Indiana consider contracting for a

¹ Exhibits and other materials referenced in these minutes can be inspected and copied in the Legislative Information Center in Room 230 of the State House in Indianapolis, Indiana. Requests for copies may be mailed to the Legislative Information Center, Legislative Services Agency, 200 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204-2789. A fee of \$0.15 per page and mailing costs will be charged for copies. These minutes are also available on the Internet at the General Assembly homepage. The URL address of the General Assembly homepage is <http://www.ai.org/legislative/>. No fee is charged for viewing, downloading, or printing minutes from the Internet.

similar service.

The chairperson called upon William Cox, managing director of school evaluation services for S&P, and Robert Durante, director of school evaluation services for S&P, to present information to the Committee. (A copy of the S&P PowerPoint presentation is Attachment A.)

According to Mr. Cox, S&P were approached by public sector groups to provide analyses similar to those provided for the private sector; thus, the school evaluation services were developed. S&P uses existing data in an analytical framework that includes return on resources, annual reports of strengths, challenges, and risks, and multi-year trends to make comparisons between schools and districts, providing an independent analysis of school performance as well as a diagnostic tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses in schools. This analysis can be used internally for evaluation and improvement as well as being released to the public as a comparison tool. While there has been some concern about airing weaknesses, and about the information provided being distorted, particularly by the media, in general it is felt the analysis provides a better framework for understanding existing data. Currently, S&P provides the evaluations to two states (Michigan and Pennsylvania), in addition to school districts in other states. The cost for the services varies according to the type of services provided and the number of school districts to be evaluated, with a current range of \$1.5 million to \$10 million annually.

Frank Bush, Indiana School Boards Association, observed that Indiana has already moved beyond refusing to face identified problems, and questioned whether the media will unfairly use the comparisons S&P makes to malign schools. He also raised the issue of whether this type of analysis would replace the current "school report cards" that publish performance and financial information for schools.

Terry Spradlin, legislative liaison for the Department of Education (Department), stated that while the data S&P would analyze is currently available in one place (the Department's website), S&P proposes to take this information to draw connections, rather than expecting readers to make these connections on their own. He sees the S&P analysis as a tool for school corporations to use in self-evaluation.

Amy Cook Lurvey, COVOH, raised questions concerning whether information relating to families, health, and other factors are included as part of the analysis. S&P includes some socio-economic information as context, and each local superintendent can add contextual information as well.

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on 3 October at the Central Nine Career Center in Greenwood, an area vocational center. A tour of the facility will begin at 10:00 A.M. for those who wish to visit the classrooms, while the Committee meeting will begin at 11:00 A.M. The Department will arrange transportation by school bus from the State House.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 A.M.